

# THE MORTON ARBORETUM

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### TWELVE SUPERIOR CLIPPED HEDGES

Ample time has elapsed since the establishment of the first hedge demonstration planting at the Morton Arboretum in 1931 to permit long range observation of the behavior of a wide range of potential hedging materials and to allow a critical evaluation of their respective merits. More than one hundred and fifty different woody plants have been tested for use as formal (clipped) hedges during the course of the trials and performance records kept for each. This has made it possible to single out a dozen of the better ones on the basis of proved merit.

Before considering the selections individually, however, it might be well to enumerate the qualifications expected of a good hedge plant. That it be hardy and adapted to the soil and moisture conditions of the area in which it is to be grown is obvious. Furthermore, it should either be of dense twiggy texture or possess the ability to branch freely when sheared. It should be low branched and clothed with foliage right to the ground line, an effect largely the result of initial training and subsequent clipping. Drastic pruning at planting time is recommended as a means of encouraging this type of development. Its foliage should be attractive both in color and texture and effective over a long period. Any additional ornamental features such as decorative flowers, fruit or interestingly colored or textured twigs would, of course, increase its desirability. Not to be overlooked, either, is the maintenance factor, the ease with which trimming may be accomplished and the frequency of clipping necessary to keep the hedge presentable. Freedom from or resistance to insect pests and diseases is another prerequisite of particular importance.

#### Japanese Quince, *Chaenomeles lagenaria umbilicata*

The lively red coloring of the new growth of this Quince contrasting vividly with the dark polished green of the older leaves is one of its most attractive features, although unlike many clipped hedges it presents a floral display (rose pink blooms) in spring which is equally charming. Structurally the plant is rigid branched with a naturally upright habit and a coarse twiggy texture. It is easily established and clips well, requiring under normal growing conditions three shearings a season. Best as a medium sized hedge, 3½ to 5 feet in height. Like other members of the Rose family it is sometimes subject to scale and fire blight. Rabbits may damage it in winter, too, especially young plants.

### Corneliancherry Dogwood, *Cornus mas*

Few hedges in the collection exceed the Corneliancherry Dogwood in density, compactness and richness of coloring. There is a pleasing lustre to its foliage and a refreshing greenness lasting throughout the growing season. The natural uniformity of leaf size and texture becomes even more noticeable on sheared hedges, giving the effect of a solid, unbroken wall of green. While the representative hedge in the collection is maintained at a height of approximately  $3\frac{1}{3}$  feet, an additional 4 would be possible by allowing a greater width than the 34 inches to which it is now held. In view of a rather slow growth rate two clippings a season are all that is necessary. Does not flower until well established.

### Washington Hawthorn, *Crataegus phaenopyrum* (syn. *cordata*)

A naturally upright habit of growth and thorny, intricately branched twigs fit this hawthorn particularly well for use in locations where tall narrow hedges are required. And, the same features which contribute to the plant's ornamental value as a tree are evident in the clipped hedge. The small lustrous 3 to 5 lobed leaves, for example, are of good color all summer and develop brilliant orange scarlet to purplish tones in autumn. The clusters of abundant small white flowers in late May, while perhaps not as profuse, are nevertheless showy, as are the small, Chinese red fruits ripening in the fall and clinging most of the winter. Unless multiple stemmed plants are used this thorn is apt to show an openness at the base. Can be maintained as low as 4 or 5 ft. or allowed to reach 6 or 8. The width limits would vary from 2 feet upward. Two clippings a season will keep it presentable.

### Winged Euonymus, *Euonymus alata*

Everything considered, the Winged Euonymus rates as one of the best hedges in the entire collection. Of unusually dense twiggy texture and well branched right to the ground line, it forms both a good looking hedge and an impenetrable barrier. In winter its soft brown corky winged twigs have a distinctive textural interest, attractive alone or when high-lighted by snow. The summer aspect is that of a solid bright green wall made up of medium sized leaves of medium texture. With autumn comes the most spectacular effect of all, the foliage change to a lovely shade of soft pink or rose. Not a fast grower, the Winged Euonymus will make the best hedge if built up slowly from the base. Easy to maintain at a 4 foot height and a 3 foot width with but two clippings a season. The type species is superior to the Compact Winged Euonymus, *E. alata compacta*, which has a tendency toward openness and legginess at the base.

### Clavey's Dwarf Honeysuckle, *Lonicera species* "Clavey's Dwarf"

A finished appearing hedge in one season is possible with this dwarf honeysuckle whose origin occurred in the seedbeds of a local nursery. Globular in shape and naturally compact, with no evidence of legginess to detract from its neat appearance, it is the ideal deciduous hedge in the  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 4 ft. height category. Its soft green foliage has a bluish cast of a hue which harmonizes well with other plants, and being persistent, it extends considerably the period of foliage effectiveness. Even the



Clipped hedge of Winged Euonymus, *Euonymus alata*, a species exemplifying the features most desired in a hedging material.



leafless branches are ornamentally noteworthy, too, their silvery coloring and twiggy texture furnishing unbroken interest through the dormant season. Three shearings a year are required.

Nippon Buckthorn, *Rhamnus davurica nipponica*

Of the several promising hedging subjects among members of the buckthorn clan our choice would go unhesitatingly to the Nippon Buckthorn from Korea and Japan. With naturally narrow oblong foliage of fine texture and attractive bright green color, it has developed into one of the neatest medium sized (38 inches) hedges in the entire collection. It responds particularly well to clipping, ordinarily requiring attention only twice a season. Being pest free further minimizes maintenance. Unfortunately not yet available through normal channels.

Alpine Currant, *Ribes alpinum*

The problem of hedging in shade need cause little concern if one is familiar with the excellent possibilities of the Alpine Currant, easily cultivated low growing member of the Saxifrage family known for its dense habit, fine textured dark green foliage and tolerance of clipping. Of advantage, too, is its tendency to leaf very early in the spring and to hold its leaves reasonably late in the fall. Here is an ideal shade tolerant hedge which with three shearings a season may be kept to 2 ft. or permitted to grow as high as 3 or 4. Inasmuch as the pistillate (fruit bearing) form is host to White Pine Blister Rust, only the immune staminate form should be planted.

Chinese Lilac, *Syringa chinensis*

Although blossom is sacrificed by the trimming operation, the Chinese Lilac still deserves an excellent rating as a hedge plant on the basis of its pleasing form, the color and uniformity of its medium textured leaves and its generally satisfactory response to clipping. Experience here has proved a rounded top the best shape for this lilac and a height of 4 feet ideal. There is no reason, however, why it could not be grown just as effectively at 6 feet. Except for two annual shearings it requires little care other than a precautionary dormant spray for scale or perhaps a spray to check mildew on the foliage during moist summers.

Other good deciduous hedges in the collection which might contest the above selections include: European Hornbeam, *Carpinus betulus*; Hedge Cotoneaster, *Cotoneaster lucida*; Peking Cotoneaster, *Cotoneaster acutifolia*; Dwarf Illinois Ninebark, *Physocarpus intermedius parvifolius*; Mountain Ninebark, *Physocarpus monogynus*; Shingle Oak, *Quercus imbricaria*; and Nannyberry Viburnum, *Viburnum Lentago*.

Korean Littleleaf Boxwood, *Buxus microphylla koreana*

Southern Boxwood, so often considered the epitome of perfection among hedge materials is, of course, unsuited to northern climates, but in the Korean Littleleaf Boxwood is a hardier, more rugged substitute which can be grown locally without difficulty. True, it lacks the year round greenness of Southern Box and its distinctive scent, but it responds very well to clipping and can be kept as low as 1 foot. Shearing induces greater density, an especially desirable feature in this case as the plant is naturally of rather loose growth. It is a characteristic of the foliage of the Korean Box to turn brownish in winter, but its

greenness is quickly restored after a few mild spring days.

Purpleleaf Wintercreeper Euonymus, *Euonymus Fortunei colorata*

While the evergreen Euonymus encountered locally are usually vine or ground cover types there are several varieties well worth considering as edgings or low hedges. The Purpleleaf Wintercreeper Euonymus is one of these, a vigorous sprawling plant which with proper training will provide a very satisfactory low edging with excellent leathery dark green foliage. The purplish coloring it assumes in winter accounts for the common name. It will grow in either sun or shade and tolerates root competition remarkably well. Rabbits are its worst enemy. The Arboretum trial hedge is kept at an approximate height of 16 inches and at a width of 2 feet.

White Pine, *Pinus strobus*

More interest is shown in the hedge of White Pine than in any of the other evergreen examples. And, whether it is the novelty of seeing a familiar tree form subjugated by shearing or the attractiveness of the hedge itself, the fact remains this pine has convincingly demonstrated its possibilities as a hedging subject. Of rather quick growth and yet remarkably dense and compact, it is a good looking hedge of fine texture and silvery green color. Inasmuch as it eventually develops considerable width it should not be used in limited areas. The representative hedge in the collection, one established in 1940, using 15 to 18 inch plants, is now 4 feet tall and 4½ feet wide. It receives only one trimming a season.

Japanese Yew, *Taxus cuspidata*

The popularity of the Japanese Yew as a hedging material continues unchallenged, and right that it should, for no other evergreen offers so much and demands so little. Having the darkest green needles (year round) of any of the conifers is in itself justification for the high rating, although its tolerance of any amount of clipping or shaping, and its adaptability to either sunny or shaded locations are equally important attributes. A more compact or closely knit hedge would be hard to find, especially one so easily taken care of. Requires only one clipping a year, in early summer after the new growth has elongated. Height of Arboretum hedge 3½ feet, width 3 feet eight inches.

In the Arboretum Hedge Garden will be found a number of other good evergreen hedges which under certain conditions might prove quite as satisfactory as those included on our select list. Among these are: Bigleaf Wintercreeper Euonymus, *Euonymus Fortunei vegeta*; American Holly, *Ilex opaca*; Pfitzer Juniper, *Juniperus Chinensis Pfitzeriana*; Globe Mugo Pine, *Pinus mugo compacta*, Browns Anglojap Yew, *Taxus media Brownii*; Hatfield Anglojap Yew, *Taxus media Hatfieldii*; Hicks Anglojap Yew, *Taxus media Hicksii* and Canadian Hemlock, *Tsuga canadensis*.

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